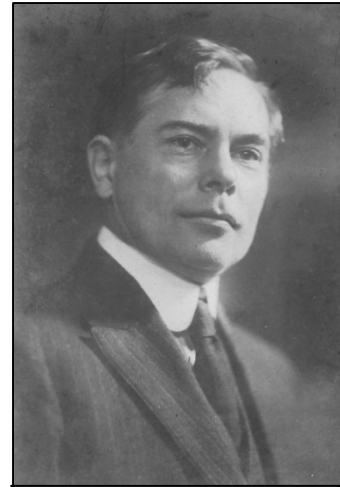


Paul R. Schumann

Paul Richard Schumann (December 13, 1876 – April 29, 1946) was a Texas impressionist painter called the interpreter of the chameleon Texas Gulf Coast¹.

Biography

Paul R. Schumann was born in his father's water powered saw mill in Reichersdorf, Saxony, Germany on December 13, 1876². He was one of four children born to Albert F. Schumann and his wife Mina Clara Zincke. Only he and his brother Albert Otto survived infancy. The family immigrated to the United States in 1879 when he was three years old and settled in Galveston, Texas where he lived until his death on April 29, 1946³.



Paul R. Schumann

According to The San Antonio Express¹, "...he apparently got his love of water during his infancy. In fact he fell into the mill race and was fished out just in time. From that time on he manifested the greatest love for water and since childhood, when he came to this country, has been living near the sea. He has had a great many narrow escapes, yet these have never deterred him in getting scenes no matter how great the risk."

Or, did the sea voyage from Germany to Texas influence him? Esse Forrester – O'Brien⁴ asks, "Did the great ocean whisper to him of her beauties, her enchanting powers, when he was crossing over from his native Germany as a lad of only three? Did he, with the innocence of youth become immunized to all else save for the love of the sea and its life?"

Forrester-O'Brien continues, "Judging from the canvases, we say that the waters and Paul Schumann are co-staring in life. As if married to the sea, he takes her for better or for worse – in tranquility and in storm. He catches with unfailing dexterity the kinship of the sea with the sky and the land – the storm clouds, the pouty, sulky thunderheads, or the washed sky after an April shower, or again the blue of the unclouded sky. He paints the land – cliffs, stretches of peaceful beach, lonely sand dunes, or a strip of busy wharf – as a frame for his water."

As a child, his only interest was art, as Frances Battaile Fisk⁵ comments, "He was the son of a millwright and was born with none of the literary tendencies, but was first and foremost an artist who felt only artistic things."

She reports, "Mr. Schumann claims to have received much encouragement in his early career, from Superintendent E. G. Littlejohn while in the Galveston Public Schools, which contributed a great deal toward his present success. This teacher often had the young man do blackboard drawings in the study of history and geography. But his art studies were under the painter J. Stockfleth; then later he began to

paint from nature which he considered the only real way to study landscape painting. The beach, the waves, at peace or in storm, the wharf and its busy life are daily lessons for Mr. Schumann who is a familiar figure to Galvestonians as he goes each day to the sea which he loves and interprets on his canvases. He brings to the people of Galveston, the water they love, and the familiar boats.”

John and Deborah Powers³ wrote that “He received instruction from Julius Stockfleth. According to a contemporary newspaper article, Schumann spent time in New York and the East studying and painting, a report corroborated by numerous surviving sketches of New York scenes.”

He married Carolina Adela Bergmann from Fredericksburg, Texas on January 29, 1903 in Galveston, Texas. They had three children – Paul August, Clara Adela and Robert Edward. She died in 1937.

The Houstonian reported⁶, “Schumann supported a wife and three children through the depression and the 1930's on his paintings alone. He turned out three paintings a day. Schumann also retouched photographs and taught some art students.”

Mrs. Ragoni of Galveston, one of his art students, said that Schumann made his students draw for five years before they could touch color⁶.

John Murphy reported in 1939⁷ that he credited his wife with being his inspiration for his art and until her death his life “has been uneventful, he believes, except for his wedding day, which marked the beginning of his career as an artist. ‘That was when I started in a professional way. But as a school boy I couldn't stop drawing in class or out.’

He's never sailed the seas as a sailor or even worked on a boat, but his familiarity with sailing ships and the sea is so complete that he makes ship models as a hobby, and then uses them as models for his paintings. After art school he started out as a portrait and landscape artist. But more and more his fancies in oil turned to the sea and ships, and the Gulf of Mexico particularly.

His paintings, once he concentrated on marines, attracted quick and growing attention.”

In addition to travel to New York, during 1910 to 1917 he traveled rather extensively throughout the United States for the time. He painted not only the Texas Gulf, but the Texas Hill Country, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California's Pacific coast, Illinois and the South East's Atlantic Coast.

But he loved the Texas Gulf Coast: “The tropical colorings cannot be painted in words. The tints breathe warmth and are as delicate as anyone might imagine and they are ever changing. Every cloud finds its reflections of a different color, and the tints change with the depth of the water”¹.

He died after a short illness from pancreatic cancer on April 29, 1946 at the age of 69⁸.

His Art

His art evolved over his life time from realism to impressionism. He also moved from brush to palette knife, and sometimes used his hands to create the image he wanted. On painting “The Storm” he

commented, "One must pay special attention to the crest and trough of the sea. I started this picture with a brush and it was rapidly working itself into a fizzle. Then I began using my fingers and you see the result. Only on the boat which is ploughing through the heavy seas, did I use a brush for its outlines. I believe you will agree with me that the waves are faithfully depicted."¹

Frances Battaile Fisk wrote⁵, "He is widely known as an interpreter of the true Gulf Coast, the typical Texas skies, as well as the deeper blues of the South Atlantic, and the quiet waters of the Pacific Coast. His work consisting of beautiful marines, oil paintings, water colors, and crayola studies, have been exhibited frequently through the State, and in important galleries of the South and East."

He painted or sketched almost every day. "He is a familiar figure, on the Galveston beach, as a day is not complete to Mr. Schumann unless he has had his visit to the beach or the wharves. Fishermen and vegetable boat owners in the Mosquito Fleet have long been interested in their artist friend who comes with his easel and catches the charm of line of the many masts, the reflection in the quiet water near the anchored boats. Often at his wish they shift their boat to form an interesting group for his painting.

No one has more sympathy with the moods of the gulf than Mr. Schumann, for the green-blue of the deep water, the splashy white-capped waves and the lavender reflections on the sandy beach are all interpreted with his brush and paint. A sea gull or a heron of his imprints portraiture on your mind through pure color value."⁹

In 1939 John Murphy⁷ praised his work as well, "In American art Mr. Schumann probably has no peer at capturing in oil dancing waters or a sailing ship on a glassy sea. His work has brought him, above all else, a satisfaction, he says, that is worth more than anything else, and an outlet for his natural love of things maritime."

Murphy comments that the distinctiveness of his work is traceable directly to his technique. "Very few of his pictures are done with brush. He uses a palette knife which resembles very closely a badly worn putty knife. With amazingly fast strokes he mixes his colors as he paints, using the three primary colors almost exclusively. So fast does he work, in fact, that he turns out a large-sized picture in from two to three hours. In 25 year he has done an estimated 1500 pictures.

'When I tell fellow artists that I work that fast they don't believe me. Once I get an idea and go to work there is no stopping, for my technique doesn't allow me to go over a painting. Once done it must stay done,' he explains."

J. W. Young wrote¹⁰, "If Paul Schuman had been painting along the New England Coast instead of the Gulf of Mexico, his marines would have been known over all the world. His boats-coming to the Gulf ports from the seven seas-are not boats sailing the seas of make-believe. Gulf skies and Gulf storms he



Paul R. Schumann Painting
at Offat's Bayou

has studied since boyhood - loves them - paints them. He is doing for the Texas Gulf shores what Winslow Homer did for the Coast of Maine."

Harry Ahysen, Professor of Art, Sam Houston State University, commented⁶, "He was a pallet knife painter who was truly 50 years ahead of his time." In his paintings, Schumann only used the shades of three colors, red, yellow and blue.

The Powers wrote³ that he "taught privately and became a very productive painter, sometimes executing three paintings in one day amid his collection of ship models and statuary. He also worked in the open air, once sketching a storm-driven sea until forced to retire by flying spray. Schumann is best known for marine and harbor scenes done in Galveston. He also produced a number of plein-air works in Louisiana, the Texas Hill Country, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and the East Coast on occasional excursions. He worked in crayon, pencil, and pen and ink as well as oils. In his oils he made extensive use of the palette knife with singular effect."



Paul R. Schumann Studio

His son, Paul A. Schumann, told the story of his father wanting to go to the Gulf's shore during a storm so that he could sketch the waves crashing on and over the sea wall. He took his son with him to hold the umbrella so that he could sketch. The waves were raising water and spray ten feet in the air as he tried to work. A particularly large wave crashed and when the water cleared, they saw a big rock had been deposited next to them. They decided it was time to go home¹¹.



Sketch Made at 3:00 am, September 14, 1919

In 1926, Le Revue Modern of Paris, France published a glowing review of Paul R. Schumann's work¹²:

"Landscape and marine painter, Paul Schumann attains in his works a truth, an intensity of impression which it seems difficult to excel - and that by means of a manner most bold, direct and free.

A canvas most characteristic of the talent of Paul Schumann, figured in the recent exposition of the Southern States Art League at Houston, 'June Skies'. It depicts the life of the fishermen on the coast of the island of Galveston, in the Gulf of Mexico; a few silhouettes, a fisherman's bark,

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the sea, the sky dotted with clouds. The vast ocean, the light and the atmosphere hold in this picture the predominant note, the figures occupying but an humble place in contrast with the vastness of nature. This work, the first which I saw by this artist, impressed me very strongly immediately, but since then I have seen others which bring out the powerful originality and the strength of the talent of Paul Schumann.

First, the gulf - nothing but the sea and the sky and the rock where indefatigably the wave crashes and breaks in white foam - its verdant scrolls. Here the artist succeeds in rendering in a most impressive manner the grandiose rhythm of his the sea. He knew where to find on his palette whatever was necessary to bring out all the tints of the water, all the caprices of the light."

...

"Truly, Paul Schumann is not only a, finished artist, master of his brush and of his technique; he is a poet of exquisite sensibility. Profoundly moved before the marvelous spectacles of nature, he possesses in the highest degree the art of making us share his emotions."

...

"Schumann can be considered as a great artist at home and abroad. To the exclusion of all formula or preconceived theory, nature remains the sole great inspiration of his work, veritable picture poems which one must praise without stint - both the form and the sentiment"



Gulf Coast Surf

The San Antonio Express provided similar compliments¹³. "The beach, the waves at peace or in storm, the wharf and its busy life are daily lessons for Mr. Schumann, who is a familiar figure to Galvestonians as he goes each day to the sea which he loves and interprets in his canvases." And, "'June Skies' paints the recently tide-washed beach, fishermen and their boats. It is beautifully handled with palette and knife. There a clearness of colors, the warm tones of the afternoon reflected sunlight and lovely transparency in the wet beach sand, all aglow from the reflections of the June skies and their billowy sunlit clouds which are so well handled."

In connection with an exhibition of his paintings in Houston, Texas the following comment was made¹⁶, "Mr. Schumann is a quiet, busy, unassuming man and unless, questioned closely will never tell one of his medals and honorable mentioned rewards, of his many oils sold to galleries and admirers throughout the country.

Texas is rightly proud of her native artist, who is an, interpreter of her moods, her skies, her hills and gulf coast.”

Recent Interest

Interest in Paul R. Schumann’s art has been increasing in the last several years. “As each new example of Schumann's work surfaces, a steady reassessment of his talents is occurring among collectors and Texas art historians.”¹⁶

“Schumann's skill in handling the palette knife in particular continues to attract notice. Moreover, conservation efforts in the cleaning of Schumann's paintings--especially the interstices--have revealed his subtle yet arresting sense of color. This is especially true in his paintings such as Sunlit Waters. This painting is strikingly similar to a painting in the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum's collection that recently received conservation treatment. Schumann's palette-knife technique anticipates the paintings of more recent artists such as Wayne Thiebaud in San Francisco. In the palette-knife paintings of both Schumann and Thiebaud, the heavy impasto "feels" almost like cake frosting.”¹⁷

And, another current comment: “Paul Schumann has been called the interpreter of the true Texas gulf coast. He is well known for impressionistic paintings of boats, recalling the works of Claude Monet. He worked with bright colors and often used a palette knife to add texture and depth to his canvases.”¹⁸

At he Dallas Fine Arts Auction in January one of his paintings, “Harvesting Oysters”, was sold at more than twice the estimated price, and garnered the fourth highest price in the auction.¹⁹

Exhibitions

The following exhibitions are recorded by John and Deborah Powers:³

- Galveston Cotton Carnival Annual Exhibition (1912)
- Galveston Art League (one-man: 1919, 1922-23, 1926, 1935, 1938)
- Annual Texas Artists Exhibition, Fort Worth (1923-37)
- Annual Exhibition of Texas Artists, Dallas Woman's Forum (1924 medal, 1927 purchase prize, 1932)
- Annual Exhibition of the Salons of America, New York (1925)
- Ernst Raba Studio, San Antonio (1925 one-man)
- Texas Artists Exhibition, San Antonio Art League (1926)
- Southern States Art League Annual Exhibition (1926, 1929 prize, 1930, 1932-34, 1936, 1938 honorable mention)
- Exhibition of Texas Artists, Nashville (Tennessee) Museum of Art (1927)
- Herzog Galleries, Houston 1927)
- Dallas Woman's Forum (1929 one-man)
- Annual Texas Artists Circuit Exhibition (1929-33)
- Annual Exhibition of the State Fair of Texas, Dallas (1929)

- Annual Texas Cotton Palace Exposition, Waco (1929-30)
- Pabst Galleries, San Antonio (1931, 1934, and 1938 one-man)
- Springfield (Illinois) Art Association (1932)
- Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago (1933)
- Victoria County Fair (1933 prize)
- Elisabeth Ney Museum, Austin (1934 one-man)
- San Antonio Local Artists Annual Exhibition (1933)
- Art Association of New Orleans (1935 prize)
- Annual Mid-Western Artists Exhibition, Kansas City (Missouri) Art Institute (1935 popular prize)
- Texas Centennial Exposition, Dallas (1936)
- Annual Southeast Texas Artists Exhibition, Houston (1937)
- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1937 one-man)
- Browse-About-Shop Gallery, Houston (1937)
- National Exhibition of American Art, Rockefeller Center, New York (1937)
- Exhibition of Paintings by Texas Artists, J. W. Young Galleries, Chicago (1940)
- Society of Texas Artists, Corpus Christi (1941)
- Sam Houston State University, Huntsville (1971 one-man)
- Texas by Texans, Texas House of Representatives Chamber, Austin (1974)
- Painters of Texas 1900-1950, Museums of Abilene (1989)
- Annual Exhibition, West Texas Fair, Abilene
- Witte Memorial Museum, San Antonio; Victoria Art Association (purchase prize).

Collections

The following collections are reported by John and Deborah Powers: ³

- Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon
- Dallas Woman's Forum
- Galveston public schools
- Galveston Beach Club
- John Sealy Hospital, Galveston
- Rosenberg Library, Galveston
- Sealy National Bank, Galveston
- Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos
- John H. Vanderpoel Art Association, Chicago
- Springfield (Illinois) Art Gallery.

Affiliations

The following affiliations are reported by John and Deborah Powers: ³

- Art Association of New Orleans

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- Galveston Art League
- Society of Independent Artists
- Society of Texas Artists
- Southern States Art League
- Springfield (Illinois) Art Association
- Texas Fine Arts Association.

Awards

The following awards were reported by Paul Schumann¹⁴ and the Dallas Morning News¹⁵:

- Arthur E. Everts Gold Medal, Dallas, Texas, 1924
- Honorable Mention, Nashville, Tennessee, 1925
- Purchase Prize, Ft. Worth Art Museum, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1926
- Purchase Prize, Dallas Woman's Forum, Dallas, Texas, 1927
- First Prize, Texas Fine Arts Association, 1929
- Prize, Southern States Art League, 1929
- First and Second Prizes, West Texas Fair, San Angelo, Texas
- First and Second Prizes, Waco Cotton Palace, Waco, Texas

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Author

Paul A. Schumann, Jr. is the author of this biography written in loving memory of his grandfather whom he never really knew in Austin, Texas, July 31, 2011.